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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 001581

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [GT](#)

SUBJECT: BERGER SELECTS EDUARDO STEIN AS VP CANDIDATE

Classified By: Acting PolCouns Rob Copley for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: The front-running Gran Alianza Nacional (GANa) officially nominated former Foreign Minister and chief of two OAS missions to Peru, Eduardo Stein, as its Vice Presidential candidate. The move, announced on June 16, broadens the appeal of the Berger ticket providing it with needed policy credentials. It is also generating optimism in civil society and human rights groups that progress on corruption and rule of law issues may be possible under a Berger government. Several members of the Unionista party have already joined the GANa as a direct result. End Summary.

2. (U) The Berger camp had been courting Stein with increasing openness for several weeks. For his part, Stein maintained in public that he would only join the Berger ticket if he was assured of an important role in policy decisions and of Berger's commitment to fighting corruption and advancing rule of law and social issues. Stein's presence on the ticket provides a solid base of credibility and experience for countering Berger's substantive weakness and appears to be attracting others to the Berger camp.

3. (C) For example, sources close to center-left Congresswoman Nineth Montengro report she is agonizing over her public promise to remain with the ANN party, when she would have far more influence as part of the GANa. In another example, Frank LaRue of the human rights group CALDH, told the Ambassador that he was rethinking his avoidance of electoral politics given the stakes in this election and the possible progress that could be made by working directly with Stein as part of a future government. LaRue said that, if the opportunity arose, he would be willing to exchange his position in CALDH for one in the government where he could make structural changes to the Justice system and seriously pursue CICIACS, a yet-to-be-established investigative body that will target clandestine groups involved in organized crime.

4. (U) Stein's nomination led to announcements that former Vice President Luis Flores, Gustavo Porras, and Congresswoman Olga Camey, all from the Unionista party had also joined the GANa.

5. (U) In accepting the VP slot, Stein made clear he is dropping his bid for the OAS Secretary General position.

Comment

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5. (C) Stein is well known to the Embassy and to many in Washington for his service as Foreign Minister in the Arzu Government and for heading OAS electoral missions to Peru in 200 and 2001. He has terrific intellectual and diplomatic skills and is a person of rock solid integrity. His nomination thus shores up a critical weakness in the Berger campaign and can be expected to generate further interest in and momentum for the GANa coalition from groups beyond its traditional backers in the private sector. We expect other high profile politicians and opinion makers will now seriously consider getting behind GANa in an effort to build a coalition capable of defeating the ruling FRG.

HAMILTON